

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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TAGS: PINS, MILL, NI

SUBJ: ANOTHER CLASH BETWEEN ARMY AND CIVILIANS

REF : 75 LAGOS 12799

1. NEWSPAPERS MORNING OF JAN. 27 BELATELY REPORT 20-HOUR SOLDIER-CIVILIAN CLASH IN WHICH AT LEAST FOUR PERSONS KILLED. MELEE STARTED ABOUT 1600 HRS. JAN 25, AT ORILE-AGEGE NEAR IKEJA AIRPORT ON OUTSKIRTS OF LAGOS, LASTED UNTIL ABOUT NOON JAN. 26. MORE THAN

50 PERSONS INJURED, 100 HOUSES INCLUDING OBA'S PALACE BURNT DOWN, 23 VEHICLES INCLUDING FIRE ENGINE DESTROYED, OVER 1,000 PERSONS HOMELESS. VICTIMS REPORT LOOTING, HAVING TO PAY RANSOM TO SAVE THEIR HOUSES AND POSSESSIONS.

2. FIGHT APPARENTLY BROKE OUT BETWEEN CIVILIANS -- TRADERS AND MASQUERADERS CELEBRATING LOCAL FESTIVAL -- AND THEN SOLDIERS

INTERVENED, ATTACKING MASQUERADERS. LATTER RETALIATED BY SETTING ONE SOLDIER ABLAZE. SOLDIERS THEN ATTACKED IN EARNEST, USING MACHETS AND OTHER WEAPONS. POLICE ATTEMPTING TO RESTORE ORDER REPORTEDLY BEATEN BACK AND DISARMED BY SOLDIERS. COTINGENT FROM BRIGADE OF GUARDS (ELITE ARMY UNIT) BROUGHT SITUATION UNDER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PARTIAL CONTROL, BUT SOME LOOTING AND HARRYING OF VILLAGERS

CONTINUED INTO JAN. 26.

COMMENT: A NUMBER OF COMMON DENOMINATORS APPEAR TO BE PRESENT IN SOLDIER-CIVILIAN INCIDENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR OR SO. THEY ARE:

A. ACTIVITY BY MASQUERADERS OR PERSONS PARTICIPATING IN SOME SORT OF CULT CEREMONY. APPARENTLY THESE PEOPLE ARE OFTEN UNDER INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS. THEY FEEL OCCASION GIVES THEM LICENSE TO BE BOISTEROUS, COMPEL BYSTANDERS SHOW THEM VARIOUS FORMS OF DEFERENS. SOLDIERS, OFTEN STRANGERS TO LOCAL CUSTOMS, REACT WITH BELLIGERENCE AND INTENTIONAL DISRESPECT.

B. ATTITUDE OF SOLDIERS THAT THEY ARE ENFORCERS OF THE LAW, BUT NOT SUBJECT TO IT.

C. LACK OF ADEQUATE CONTROL OVER SOLDIERS BY OFFICERS, WHO MAY BE AT HEADQUARTERS SOME DISTANCE FROM SCENE OF DISTURBANCE. OFFICER CORPS IS SPREAD TOO THIN FOR EFFECTIVE CONTROL: AVERAGE BATTALION HAS ABOUT SIX OFFICERS WHEN NORMAL TO RPT TO AND E RPT E WOULD CALL FOR 30 OR MORE.

D. THE INEVITABLE TENSIONS THAT ARISE WHEN SOLDIERS ARE QUARTERED IN CIVILIAN AREAS BECAUSE OF LACK OF BARRACKS.

SENIOR OFFICERS HAVE SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME SINCE LAST YEAR'S COUP VISITING UNITS IN FIELD, TRYING TO IMPRESS UPON SOLDIERS THEIR OBLIGATION BE LAW-ABIDING, AVOID CONFLICT WITH CIVILIANS. HOWEVER, SPORADIC INCIDENTS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE UNTIL LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS ARE FOUND TO PROBLEMS DESCRIBED IN C. AND D. ABOVE.
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